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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/09): "SAVING GAZA TO SAVE THE PLO"

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Main Stories:  
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The situation in Gaza continues to dominate all Palestinian news outlets. Al Quds leads with news of the rescue of four Palestinian children clinging to the bodies of their dead mothers killed in the Gaza fighting. The paper adds, in red font headlines, that bodies of 50 Palestinians were found in the Gaza rubble, bringing the Palestinian death toll to 767. The paper also reports on Israeli overnight strikes that killed four Palestinians, one of whom was a photographer for Palestinian Authority President Abbas. All front pages highlight UNRWA's decision to suspend operations in Gaza after Israeli "attacks" on its personnel and facilities. Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida lead with "agreement" at the UN Security Council over a draft resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, while Al Quds highlights that the UN Human Rights Council will hold an emergency session on January 9, "to pressure Israel" on operations in Gaza. Al Ayyam's front page adds that Israel is, "determined to commit more crimes" as Palestinians continue to die in the Israeli military operation. Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page adds that the "Gaza massacre" continues, as more Palestinians are found dead under the rubble. Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida front page reports that one Israeli army officer and two other soldiers were killed, and 13 soldiers injured on January 8.

In news on U.S. actions, Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page reports that Secretary Rice and her French and British counterparts have decided to extend their stay in New York to continue work with Arab counterparts on a Gaza draft resolution that will be put to a UN Security Council vote on January 9. Both Al Hayat Al Jadida's and Al Quds' front pages cite news agencies in reporting that the U.S. Congress has voted to formally express support for the Israeli "aggression" on Gaza. The Congress called for a ceasefire agreement that will prevent Hamas from using Gaza as a base to fire rockets

into Israel. Al Quds' inside page cites AFP in reporting that a State Department spokesman stated on January 8 that the U.S. is asking Israel to increase the number of hours of the daily "humanitarian pause" in Gaza. He also described the humanitarian situation in Gaza as "dire"

In photo coverage, Al Quds leads with a photo of a young Palestinian girl weeping over the dead bodies of her relatives, lying in a heap on her doorstep. Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida run an aerial photo of Palestinians gathered around the rubble of a destroyed Gaza mosque. Al Ayyam runs a lead photo of a Palestinian "expressing shock" as a crowd gathers on a visibly blood-stained Gaza street. All papers run front page statements by Palestinian Authority President Abbas made in Madrid on January 8, expressing support for the Egyptian-French ceasefire proposal. Al Quds' front page cites AFP in quoting a statement issued by Palestinian opposition groups including Hamas, in Damascus on January 8. The groups state that the Egyptian-French ceasefire, "is not a good basis" for solving the current crisis in Gaza and is aimed at increasing pressure on Palestinian resistance groups.

Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida run front page statements by Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Fayyad, following a PA cabinet meeting in Ramallah on January 8. Fayyad describes Gaza "fighting" as another Palestinian national catastrophe, reminiscent of the establishment of Israel in 1948. Coverage notes that Fayyad refused to respond to a question about when PA President Abbas' term will end, by stating that it was, "irrelevant to discuss that now." Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page quotes another PA official, Minister of Planning Abdullah, estimating that there has been \$2 billion worth of damage to Gaza infrastructure.

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Al Hayat Al Jadida cites AFP in highlighting front page statements by EU foreign policy chief Solana made in Ankara on January 8 that the EU is ready to resume its observer mission at the Rafah-Egypt crossing point.

In reporting on the humanitarian situation in Gaza Al Quds' front page runs testimonies from Gaza medics describing, "genocide and ethnic cleansing against Palestinians." The same front page also highlights statements by Vatican Peace and Justice Cardinal Renato Martino comparing Gaza to a concentration camp. Al Ayyam runs a front page story of a Palestinian woman describing how Israeli soldiers killed her unarmed husband, "who had his hands up", and then killing four of her children and 25 other members of her family. She also speaks about how her son bled to death while she pleaded for help, but no one was able to access them.

An Al Quds' inside page cites DPA in reporting that Gaza Fatah official Ibrahim Abu Alnajah has denied Israeli media reports that Hamas is using the "war in Gaza" as a pretext to kill Fatah activists. The paper also cites the same source in reporting about nine Israeli human rights organizations' January 8 appeal to the Israeli High Court to stop Israeli army action that "targets" medical teams in Gaza. The paper also runs featured inside reports on the Israeli police preventing Palestinian children in Jerusalem from staging a peaceful protest near the Holy Sepulcher Church on January 8. The children wanted to show their solidarity with the children of Gaza, reporting notes.

Al Quds' and Al Hayat Al Jadida's front pages cite AFP and news agencies in reporting on four Katyusha rockets landing in northern Israel. Reporting notes that Hizbullah has denied responsibility and queried, "What came first? Rockets or the alleged Israeli artillery response?"

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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1) Al Quds editorial is titled, "Diplomatic procrastination as massacres continue"(01/09): "The procrastination on the part of some countries, especially the USA, in issuing the [UN Security Council] resolution for a ceasefire in Gaza, gives Israel the green light to continue its aggression in the Strip and kill dozens, perhaps hundreds, of Palestinian innocents. It is inhuman to transform Gaza residents into hostages or a mere bargain chip in order to achieve Israeli goals - which nobody even knows what they

[goals]are. There was a truce before this absurd war, and if this [new] truce, regardless of its conditions, is the ultimate result of this aggression, why did Israel wage war in the first place?"

2) Mohamad Yaghy opines in Al Ayyam under the title "Saving Gaza to save the PLO" (01/09): "[Palestinian Authority (PA)] President Abbas could use the Arab League or his [presidential] office in Ramallah as a platform to announce, that unless the war on Gaza stops and Gaza crossings are opened, he will refuse to extend his term in office. He could also announce that the PA might cease to exist [once he leaves office, thereby throwing responsibility] back in the face of Israel, its allies and the Arab regimes, who can try to figure out what to do, and what their solutions to the crisis will be... This step by the PA Presidency, would not only be an act made in the defense of Gaza, but also an act of self-defense, to protect its [own] legitimacy and existence that are being crushed by Israeli tanks."

WALLES